United Nations A/51/PV.35

General Assembly
Fifty-first Session

Official Records

35th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 15 October 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 156

Observer Status for the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol in the General Assembly

Draft resolution (A/51/L.1)

The President: I call on the representative of Sweden to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.1.

Mr. Osvald (Sweden): It is an honour for me to introduce, on behalf of the 43 co-sponsors, the draft resolution entitled "Observer Status for the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol in the General Assembly", contained in document A/51/L.1. I should mention that in that document the Islamic Republic of Iran was inadvertently omitted as an original co-sponsor of the draft. The following countries have also informed us that they wish to join the list of sponsors: Australia, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Croatia, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Republic of Moldova, Romania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

Combating and preventing international crime is a crucial challenge to the international community. Unless we cooperate at a global level, we will not succeed in this endeavour. It is therefore essential to do what we can to facilitate and promote cooperation and coordination between the different organs involved in combating crime with transnational ramifications.

The work of Interpol in this area is well known and widely recognized. As many as 176 States are currently represented in Interpol, making it a unique global forum for crime prevention. Interpol has cooperated with the United Nations for years on a wide-ranging set of issues related to crime prevention and law enforcement. Last year, at the Interpol General Assembly in Beijing, the members of Interpol unanimously adopted a resolution expressing Interpol's desire to obtain observer status with the United Nations General Assembly in order to provide for still-closer cooperation between the organizations.

Against this background, my delegation, together with other delegations from all the different regional groups, has submitted the draft resolution before us. We believe that granting Interpol observer status with the General Assembly will contribute greatly to efforts to combat international crime. Interpol is an intergovernmental organization that meets the criteria for the granting of observer status with the General Assembly laid down in decision 49/426. The operative part of the draft resolution invites the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol to participate in the sessions and work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer, and requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the resolution. It is our hope that the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

96-86520 (E)

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The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.1?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 51/1).

The President: In accordance with the resolution just adopted, I now call on Mr. Björn Eriksson, President of the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol.

Mr. Eriksson (International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol): The Secretary General of the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol, Mr. Raymond Kendall, and I are very honoured to be present in the United Nations General Assembly today. On behalf of the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol, I should like to take the opportunity to express our deep appreciation for the decision to grant the organization the status of observer to the United Nations General Assembly.

We are very proud of the fact that next week we shall be able to report back to our governing body, the Executive Committee, and to our General Assembly that we have achieved the objective of our General Assembly last year, namely to obtain observer status within the United Nations General Assembly.

The Secretary General and I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the Swedish delegation to the United Nations and to the Member countries that have representatives on Interpol's Executive Committee, as well as to the other sponsors of the resolution, who have done so much to promote ICPO-Interpol's observer status within the United Nations General Assembly.

The mission of ICPO-Interpol, with its 176 member countries, is to combat international offences against ordinary criminal law while respecting human rights and the laws of its member countries. The United Nations and the ICPO-Interpol are in many ways carrying out the same mission whose aim is to create a safer world. Consequently, our two organizations have, for many years, cooperated in many sectors relating to crime prevention and law enforcement. Today's decision will mean that we have formed an even better platform at the highest level to reinforce and extend our cooperation. Let us not forget that our two organizations serve the vast majority of people in the world in the fight against the minority that commits crimes. Today's decision, therefore, will benefit not only our two organizations, but also the people we serve.

Today the International Criminal Police Organization is equipped with highly sophisticated information technology facilities as well as an advanced, fast and secure communications network, which makes it possible for us to transmit information from one continent to another with absolute security. The Organization also has an analytical Crime Intelligence Unit working on international crime on the basis of the information received from all 176 member countries. The Unit produces reports that are of the utmost importance for forming effective law-enforcement strategies and policies.

For some time now, we have been engaged in a regionalization process and have established subregional bureaux in Asia, Africa and South America. We foresee that this development will continue and that Interpol will be able to enhance law-enforcement cooperation at the regional level.

Finally, the United Nations, its agencies and Interpol have cooperated for many years in the field of law enforcement. During recent years, we have expanded cooperation into new areas, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. I am certain that in future we shall find even more new areas for cooperation.

As representatives of the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol, the Secretary General and I are convinced that our organization has the ability and structure to meet the demands of the future. We hope that through joint efforts, together with the United Nations, we shall be able to step into the twenty-first century and prove even more effective in the fight against international crime.

We believe that the greatest threat to our democracy today is that presented by the menace of organized crime and drug trafficking, whose combined resources, derived from their illegal activities, enable them to corrupt our democratic institutions at the highest level. With political will and an action-oriented approach, we shall be in a much more favourable position. The higher status granted to ICPO-Interpol will enable the organization better to combine and coordinate its actions in the furtherance of our primary objective — to make the world a safer place. Once again, the Secretary General and I renew our thanks and appreciation.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 156?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 98 (*continued*)

Operational activities for development

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children (A/51/256)

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): The World Summit for Children was a historic landmark not only because it gathered 71 Heads of State and 88 ministerial delegates to agree on a document, but also because it launched an unprecedented movement in favour of children throughout the world.

The progress achieved since the World Summit for Children is encouraging and proves that the United Nations can play an effective role in the field of development. One could argue that the progress would have been achieved anyway. This may be true to some extent, but the establishment of time-bound and measurable goals by the Summit certainly had a major impact in mobilizing commitment and resources.

Brazil not only ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but has also made positive strides towards the end-decade goals, particularly in the fields of immunization, salt iodization and vitamin A supplementation. A key element in this effort was the establishment of partnerships on various levels in the implementation of the World Summit's goals.

On one level, close collaboration was established between the Government and civil society. The preparation of the programme of action was the result of a participatory process. The organ responsible for the definition of national policies and guidelines relating to children — the Council for Defence of the Child and Adolescent — is actually composed of representatives both of various ministries and of non-governmental organizations. This approach has conferred greater legitimacy on policies and actions and at the same time has helped to promote awareness and the mobilization of local populations.

A second level of partnership is embodied in the coordination of actions between federal, state and municipal governments. Decentralization has been a key feature of our national follow-up process to the World Summit for Children. Theoretically, it would have been easier for the federal Government to prepare a national programme of action and to consult with State Governments on it. Instead, we chose to launch a process that resulted in the preparation of programmes of actions at the State level, with the strong involvement of municipalities. The importance of this approach is that it fostered a sense of joint responsibility among the different spheres of government. At the same time, it ensured that the specific needs of each region were adequately taken into account.

On still another level, we developed a partnership approach with our neighbours. In 1994, the 28 Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean ratified their commitment to the goals for children by subscribing to the Nariño Accord. Earlier this year, our countries gathered again in Santiago to take stock of their policies and to discuss future directions. The regional partnership has provided the opportunity for Latin America and the Caribbean to develop its own perspective on children's issues — for instance, by introducing commitments related to child rights additional to those initially agreed in the World Summit for Children.

Last but not least comes partnership with children themselves. In Brazil, we have been working together with grass-roots organizations that are actually led by children. Our approach is in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which views children as social subjects and not only as objects of policies. In all those partnerships, the role of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as a catalyst for action has been important.

According to the Secretary-General's report, there is:

> "an encouraging trend towards the achievement of the majority of the goals for children." *(A/51/256, para. 11)*

Yet there are major challenges ahead.

It is important to keep the momentum going in countries that have already reached the mid-decade goals, or even the end-decade goals, and not to bask in the warmth of past achievements. We should be concerned

with sustainability of goals in countries that risk being marginalized in terms of support by the international community. It is too soon for the international community, in particular for UNICEF, to reduce its support to those countries.

Another challenge will be to accelerate progress towards the end-decade goals, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Some end-decade goals will be more difficult to achieve than the mid-decade ones because they involve more complex actions. Brazil remains committed to accelerating the pace, particularly towards the goals of reducing maternal mortality and of improving the quality of basic education.

As for basic education, the prospects are particularly encouraging. We are focusing on better training and salaries for teachers, ensuring that the resources for education go directly to the schools and that expenditures are supervised by local communities, as well as on improving education materials and technologies.

A constitutional amendment proposed by the Federal Government and already approved in the first round of voting will ensure an increase of resources for basic education next year from approximately $80 to $300 per child per year, which is more than the level of $230 recommended by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Brazil attaches great importance to improving the protection of children in especially difficult circumstances. Particularly concerned by reports of child labour, child prostitution and other forms of violence, the Federal Government has embarked on a national campaign against the exploitation of children and adolescents. We are expanding the coverage of a programme aimed at providing a monthly allowance of $50 to families who remove their children from work in mines and plantations and send them to school.

We are also concerned with the situation of children in armed conflict. The report on this subject, prepared by Mrs. Graça Machel — the expert designated by the Secretary-General, to whom I wish to pay tribute here — provides a sound analysis on the subject and contains recommendations that should be implemented. We will certainly take these findings into account in our bilateral cooperation programmes, such as those with Angola and Mozambique.

In response to the threat that landmines pose to civilians, particularly children, Brazil imposed a moratorium on the export of such weapons and is supporting the negotiation of a convention to ban landmines.

The Secretary-General's report does not contain an assessment of the progress in ensuring improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances. The establishment of measurable indicators to assess this goal is certainly not an easy task. However, we are convinced that, with or without such indicators, the full implementation of the standards contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child is to be pursued actively by the international community. The "rights" approach of the Convention increasingly will become the overarching basis for our future actions in favour of children.

Mr. Robinson (United States of America): It is a pleasure to be here today and to have the opportunity to review the progress towards implementation of the goals set by the World Summit for Children here in New York just over six years ago.

The mid-decade review of progress towards the goals set at the World Summit for Children presents a unique opportunity to refocus the attention of the world and of each country on our children. It is an opportunity to evaluate successes as well as shortfalls, to learn the lessons of the past five years and to use those lessons in identifying the strategies we will need to reach the Summit goals and to sustain our success.

As a Member State representative, I would like to take a few moments to review some of the actions that my Government has taken to achieve the goals agreed at the Summit in 1990. As is true for almost all countries, the well-being of our nation's women and children has improved in some ways, but has not done well in others.

I would like to highlight some of the encouraging trends: first, the rate of full immunization for two-year olds has increased; secondly, infant mortality continues to decline; thirdly, teen birth rates for those aged 15 to 19 have declined, although the teen birth rate is still higher than 20 years ago.

There are also some less positive trends, and I think we should share the good as well as the not-so-good. First, AIDS has become the third leading cause of death among American women 25 to 44 years of age; among

adolescents with AIDS, 38 per cent are female. Secondly, about 25 million women smoke in the United States, causing the deaths of an estimated 106,000 women and 3,500 infants each year. Thirdly, violence is a major public health problem, with more than one million children and women injured each year. Fourthly, for many indicators of well-being, minority children and youth fare much worse than majority children and youth.

As a Member State, we endeavour to take stock of our gains, to understand where we can improve, and to prepare our responses. To do this, it is crucial that we have the most accurate and comprehensive trend information possible. We have worked hard to improve the quality and completeness of this information.

Our children and youth are truly our nation's most valuable resource. The mid-decade goals and the goals for the year 2000 help us establish priorities for the protection and nurturing of that resource. We are taking this data and the lessons learned about where further improvement is necessary and possible, and using it to ensure that the aspirations of the World Summit for Children become a reality.

I will now turn to international efforts. As a donor, the United States is very pleased to hear about the progress that has been made to date towards achieving the Summit goals. The accomplishments outlined in the present document are substantial, and we commend them. At the same time, the United States believes that additional plans and actions would enable us to take full advantage of the opportunity presented by this review.

We recommend a process of cost-effective consultation with partners and international experts to be planned and implemented — as was done for the Summit for Children — to identify lessons learned and strategies needed to reach the goals for the year 2000.

In challenging areas such as acute respiratory infection, nutrition, measles and maternal mortality, international partners, including the United States, have gained substantial experience since 1990. Consultation with these partners would enhance the ability of the United Nations to support implementing countries by making this experience available. As indicated in this progress report, continued advocacy and leadership are needed by organizations of the United Nations system, notably the United Nations Children's Fund, in this regard.

We sincerely hope that this mid-decade review will help to revitalize the consensus and commitment to children and the goals for them that were initiated at the 1990 Summit.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): We are participating in the discussion of item agenda 98 at a time of increasing international commitment to safeguarding the rights of the child and the potential of children. This commitment has already been reaffirmed by the unprecedented number of ratifications of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: 187 to date, a number never before achieved by any other human rights convention.

On 30 September, we marked the sixth anniversary of the World Summit for Children. That Summit was the first international conference of the 1990s and reaffirmed that the rights of the child and the safeguarding of those rights by States and individuals help in achieving the physical, psychological and intellectual development of children, enabling them subsequently to make a positive contribution to creating a healthy society in which the rights of individuals and communities are respected.

Because of the ongoing efforts made by international and national bodies, the rights of children have now become the human rights that are most likely to be implemented in practice. These rights have today become a tangible reality, as borne out by increases in basic social services, such as health and education, as well as by the establishment of legal and legislative structures at the national level. Likewise, people in government who can serve children in the future have been educated in this regard.

Egypt quickly ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. President Mubarak also declared a decade for the protection of the Egyptian child, from 1990 to the end of the millennium. We are making enormous efforts to ensure the protection of children, and have set up a national council for mothers and children, responsible for establishing general policies as well as a national plan to guarantee that children are a part of all Government planning. We have established specialized children's libraries in various areas and children's health is attended to in schools. Recent media campaigns have promoted mother and child health. Parliament has adopted a new uniform law for children whose provisions are more in keeping with the text of the Convention. Previously, all these matters had been scattered in various laws that were not legally homogeneous, and were incomprehensible to

the ordinary citizen and even to lawyers and judges. For the first time, then, Egypt has adopted a law that brings together the various rules and provisions concerning children, from the foetal stage until the child is capable of assuming adult responsibilities.

As we take stock of the situation at mid-decade and see what has been done at the national level, we note that Egypt's actions as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General have been combined with the national cooperation efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund in Cairo to address the question of the provision of drinking water and other services. Positive indicators are mentioned, and in the next five years these will be supplemented with regard to the education of children. We continue to face challenges and obstacles, particularly in certain tribal areas. Our immunization campaigns will continue along with efforts in the area of family planning and sanitation.

In conclusion, I appeal for the protection of children and for the rights and physical integrity of the child to be guaranteed, especially in armed conflicts. We condemn military actions which subject citizens to death or displacement. The children who come to mind are those in the occupied Arab territories, Palestine and Lebanon, who have been killed or have been victims of acts violence, as well as many others who are victims of armed aggression. I would also like to mention African children who suffer from poverty and famine as well as from the absence of peace. I call upon all States to support the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa to strengthen development in that continent. These measures should be implemented, as they are of primary importance to ensure respect for African children.

Mr. Hahm (Republic of Korea): I would like to begin by extending our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his excellent report on mid-decade progress on the World Summit for Children (A/51/256). My delegation believes that the report presents a clear and comprehensive overview of the situation of children worldwide at this important halfway mark and suggests future actions to be pursued during the second half of the decade in order to reach the goals for the year 2000.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to commend the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for its valuable role in the follow-up process, for its strong leadership in developing a national plan of action and for monitoring the progress towards the goals. Furthermore, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the various non-governmental organizations, including the UNICEF national committees, which have striven with great commitment and dedication to the global agenda for children.

The report indicates an encouraging trend towards the achievement of the majority of the goals for children in most countries. Two of the more noteworthy accomplishments relate to control of preventable diseases and the near universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a critical step in creating an environment for the protection of children. All of us here today should be proud of these mid-term achievements.

Despite these positive developments, we still face many of the same challenges today as we did five years ago and even as far back as 50 years ago. Tragically, tens of thousands of children continue to die every day from malnutrition and diseases, which are preventable. The report states that about 12 million children under the age of five die annually and that about 70 per cent of these deaths are due to preventable disease. Most of the children who are perishing from preventable disease and malnutrition are in developing countries, particularly South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Even more disturbing is that millions of these children exist in an environment where fear and turmoil are a part of their daily lives; many of these children are recruited as combatants in regional conflicts.

In addition to basic survival issues, another critical area at this mid-term review time, though it is not explicitly expressed as a goal, is gender disparities. It is disheartening to note that little or no major improvements have been made to remedy gender disparities both in school enrolment and illiteracy in developing countries, and that the situation with regard to the commercial exploitation of children and reports of child abuse worldwide has been deteriorating.

As we stand on the threshold of the next millennium, we must confront the question of how individual Governments and the international community as a whole should address these challenges for the coming years. First and foremost, bringing an end to the needless deaths of some 8 million children each year must continue to be a key priority in the years ahead. To that end, the international community should assist developing countries in the effort to reduce the mortality rate of children.

Given the direct and vital role that women play in child welfare and given the vulnerability of girls, a

framework for women's equality and empowerment should be more actively applied to the mainstreaming of gender issues in both national and international strategies for the next half-decade.

In light of the vital role played by non-governmental organizations and the private sector in children's advocacy, raising public and political awareness, mobilizing resources and fostering more active and systemic involvement should be encouraged at all levels, from developing and implementing strategies for the second half-decade to monitoring and assessing their progress.

Another issue which my delegation considers of vital importance is the collection of indicators and statistical data, the tools with which to quantify progress not only at this mid-decade point but also during future assessments. The unfortunate reality is that we are generally faced with constraints, such as data limitation and unavailability, a lack of reliable sources, inappropriate measuring techniques and the misclassification of data. My delegation firmly believes that improvements in collecting data and measuring indicators and statistics are crucial if we are accurately to assess the progress of work toward our common goals.

During the past five years, there has been growing recognition that working towards the goals established for children naturally contributes to the attainment of other social and economic goals. It is evident that the series of global conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations during the 1990s following the World Summit for Children has consolidated and broadened the notion of human-centred development, and the environmental and human rights agenda. Based on this encouraging experience, my delegation would like to reaffirm its commitment to children and to forging an international partnership in completing the tasks before us by the year 2000. It is the profound hope of my delegation that the articles of the Declaration of the World Summit will become a reality in the not-too-distant future.

Ms. Thahim (Pakistan): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on progress at mid-decade on implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children. We find the report useful, objective and forthright. We would also like to express appreciation to the relevant United Nations agencies for their role not only in helping to bring this document about, but also in the Summit's follow-up process.

We commend the non-governmental organizations for their genuine efforts and valuable contributions towards the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Summit. The actions of these non-governmental organizations in the follow-up to the Summit did not represent merely a conventional struggle. It was a crusade on behalf of children. A great deal of credit for whatever we have accomplished at the mid-decade point goes to these organizations.

Pakistan takes great pride in having been one of the initiators of the World Summit for Children. We will continue our steadfast commitment to the noble goals of the Summit. In Pakistan, the Government has embarked upon many programmes aimed at accomplishing the goals set by the Summit. We have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We are addressing child-related issues with a high degree of urgency and seriousness. We have succeeded in creating widespread awareness in all sections of society about the needs and rights of our children. Laws concerning children's rights have been strengthened. Institutional mechanisms for the protection of children, such as special committees for prosecuting violators of labour laws, have been established. In the health sector, we have eradicated the scourge of guinea worm disease, dramatically reduced the number of deaths caused by measles and achieved near-universal salt iodization.

In Pakistan, as in many developing countries, a number of major tasks remain to be accomplished. Infant and maternal mortality levels continue to be unacceptably high. We are considering an optimal strategy at the national level for overcoming the grave impediments of resource constraints, in the form of a set of measures to ensure optimal utilization of limited resources. This will have to be complemented by a pool of trained and motivated staff. We are, therefore, focusing on this aspect. Despite our achievements, further attention needs to be given to health care by strengthening existing services.

We believe that at the national level, powerful legislation, socio-economic reforms and education are effective measures to achieve the goals of the Summit. It is gratifying to note that in the process of the follow-up to the World Summit for Children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has become the most rapidly accepted human rights treaty in history. As of July 1996, the Convention had been ratified by 187 countries. This is a remarkable achievement. We hope that it will assist the

international community in accomplishing the goals of the Summit.

The Secretary-General has rightly observed that the test of all international declarations and plans is the degree to which they are implemented by national Governments and all sections of society. We would like to add that such declarations have to be matched by a collective commitment to concrete actions.

At the mid-decade point, we note that the most striking progress in the context of child survival has been made in the areas of immunization coverage, the control of diarrhoeal diseases, polio, guinea worm and iodine-deficiency disorders, and the promotion of breast-feeding. Accomplishment of these goals has been made possible by concerted efforts by Governments, communities, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. We must now sustain the progress, particularly in the field of immunization. Special attention should be focused on sub-Saharan Africa, in view of the fact that 14 out of the 18 countries with less than 50 per cent child immunization coverage are in this region.

We are acutely concerned that the progress on malnutrition, maternal mortality, sanitation and girls' education has been weak, uncertain or even negligible. The prevalence of child malnutrition is disturbingly high in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, as is maternal mortality. Progress in providing clean water and sanitation and in ensuring that all children are able to attend school is painfully slow. There is yet another area that gives us cause for deep concern. While under-five mortality has declined in all regions, the pace of progress has been too slow to meet the end-of-decade goal, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

While analysing the diversity in progress towards achieving the Summit's goals, the Secretary-General has observed that given their historical background, differing levels of development, existing levels of capacity and other initial conditions, countries and regions face different degrees of challenges in meeting the goals set at the global level.

We do not disagree with the Secretary-General's observations regarding the causes of diversity in progress. We would, however, like to caution against brushing aside the perpetual inability of countries and regions to meet the goals set at a global level by simply explaining the realities on the ground. If the tragedies of under-five mortality in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, which together account for three fourths of all under-five deaths in the world, continue to defy national strategies, the situation cannot be ignored. It calls for urgent and concerted action. The United Nations Children's Fund will have to intensify its efforts. The international community will have to help the developing countries in capacity-building to formulate and implement effective programmes.

Today the survival, protection and development of children are threatened in varying degrees in many parts of the world, particularly in the developing countries. It is the common responsibility of the international community to ensure that all of us have the opportunity to bring up healthy, educated, protected and secure children. Let us not forget the plight of children in especially difficult circumstances, particularly in situations of armed conflict.

Children represent our future. They deserve a place at the top of our national and international agendas. After all, the dream of a happy and secure world cannot come true as long as there is a single child living in misery and despair in any part of the globe. Pakistan fully endorses the Secretary-General's recommendation that the General Assembly should consider holding a special session in five years' time to examine how far the world's nations have fulfilled their promises for children. The year 2000 would be the right time to assess our achievements. Let us pledge today that we will fulfil our promises for children.

Finally, while pledging to fulfil our promises for children, let us also reflect on the issues and address some pertinent questions. Why is it that serious problems continue to defy national strategies in the poor countries? How do we tackle these stubborn obstacles in the way of global development? The answer to the first question is provided by the fact that there is a massive mismatch between the magnitude of requirements and the amount of resources available to the concerned countries to enable them to take concrete and effective measures. The answer to the second question is that the international community needs to tackle these problems with adequate resources, with a high degree of determination and perseverance, and on a war footing.

Mr. Ahmed (India): Let me first of all compliment the Secretary-General for his exhaustive report on the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of the General Assembly resolution on the World Summit for Children (A/51/256).

We have noted with satisfaction that the area in which the most progress has been made is the control of preventable diseases, specifically the promotion of services such as immunization, control of iodine-deficiency disorders, eradication of polio and guinea worm disease, and protection of breastfeeding. It is equally heartening to note the marked progress in creating an environment for the protection of childhood by the near-universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that access to safe water has improved considerably.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

However, it is a matter of great concern for all of us that in relation to some goals there has not been significant progress. The weakest areas are in the fields of malnutrition, maternal mortality, adult literacy and the spread of sanitation services. We agree with the Secretary-General that more needs to be done in pursuit of these goals; the challenges for the rest of the decade will be to improve our record. While the World Summit for Children had an extraordinary mobilizing power, generating new partnership between Governments, non-governmental organizations, donors, the media, civil society and international organizations, it is of paramount importance that the newly created partnership be strengthened and expanded. We have given our commitment to the children and we have to fulfil our promises. We welcome the call of the Secretary-General for the General Assembly to consider holding a special session in five years' time to examine the extent to which the world's nations have fulfilled their promises.

It is my privilege to speak a few words to this body, on behalf of the Government of India, in review of our own progress in achieving mid-decade goals. India's commitment to the care of children since our independence is enshrined in our Constitution. As a follow-up to this commitment, the Government of India adopted a National Policy for Children in 1974 with a view to providing adequate services to children, both before and after birth and through the period of growth, to ensure their full physical, mental, child-health, nutritional and educational progress. Following the Declaration adopted by 71 Heads of State or Government at the World Summit for Children, the Government of India set itself the task of achieving major goals in health, water and sanitation, nutrition, education, removal of gender bias and improved protection for children in especially difficult circumstances.

India is a signatory to the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for implementing it. With India's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a rights-oriented approach to children and development is gaining importance and will henceforth form the basis of Government strategy to achieve major goals of child development.

In the health sector, the goal of reduction of mortality and morbidity could be achieved to the extent of 95 per cent, leaving a gap of 5 per cent to be covered. This is an enormous task, given the sizeable proportion of India's population under age 14, whose number, it is estimated, will be 305 million by the year 2001.

As regards the goal of providing universal access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation, we have so far been able to provide 89.3 per cent of the habitations with at least one source of drinking water. Today, there are less than 1,000 villages with no source of drinking water. Pilot projects for fluorosis control have been started in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab and Gujarat, where incidences of fluorosis have been reported. Access to sanitary means of disposal of human wastes includes 19.2 per cent of rural households.

On nutrition, 15 major states have reported coverage of more than 80 per cent of infants receiving measles vaccinations, and getting their first vitamin A dose of 100,000 international units. More than 67 per cent of edible salt at the production level is iodized. It is reported that oral rehydration therapy has become popular in over 80 per cent of our villages.

The Government of India's National Nutrition Policy, adopted in 1993, is yielding definite results towards solving the problem of malnutrition, both through direct nutrition intervention for especially vulnerable groups and through various conditions of improved nutrition.

As regards education, the 1986 National Policy on Education and the 1992 Programme of Action envision education as fundamental to the all-around development of children, and stipulate free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality for all children up to 14 years of age before the turn of the century. the National Policy on Education also emphasizes universal enrolment of children. The current status indicates that an incremental approach to primary education is being followed in 125 districts in an estimated 15,000 out of 750,000 primary schools. The All-India Educational Survey of 1993

reported improvement in primary schools' gross enrolment ratio by 42 per cent overall and by 7.5 per cent among girls, over a period of seven years from 1986 to 1993.

The attendance rate for girls in rural areas has increased by 12 per cent over the past five years. As a result of the increased attendance rate in rural areas over the past five years, 36 million more girls of the age group of 5 through 14 are now going to primary schools in India.

To achieve the goal of universalization of elementary education, a number of programmes have been introduced, such as Operation Blackboard, Minimum Levels of Learning, the Scheme of Operationalizing, Microplanning and the Scheme of Non-formal Education. These programmes aim at bringing about substantial improvement in the facilities and quality of education in primary schools, along with improvement in the existing levels of learning achievement of children.

In order to remove gender bias and provide improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, a National Plan of Action for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Decade of the Girl Child 1991-2000 is under implementation. Non-governmental organizations are being encouraged to start non-institutional services. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986 is more vigorously applied, as child labour persists because of socio-economic compulsions.

Our achievements notwithstanding, the tasks ahead of us are daunting. However, we intend to address them frontally and with vigour. An optimal utilization and mobilization of internal and external resources are being attempted. Our efforts in the field of child development are testimony to India's commitment to the cause of children. Our actions are aimed at child-centred development in which children are not just recipients of the benefits of services and programmes but the focus of development itself.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to urge the international community to collaborate more closely with national Governments in the successful implementation of the strategies drawn up with a view to keeping our promises to the children of the world. I wish to extend a note of appreciation for the help given us by many United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund, in the tasks we have set ourselves, and to express the hope that such cooperation may continue.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Six years ago the World Summit for Children was successfully convened. Today, we are pleased to see that all countries have worked very hard to turn the commitments they made at that Summit into reality, with encouraging results achieved in improving the survival, protection and development of children. This can be attributed first and foremost to the political will of all Governments and to their commitment to children, as well as to the rapid entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which, as an international legal instrument, has provided a legal framework for the actions taken by countries. In addition, effective international cooperation on behalf of children has also played a positive role. The Chinese delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the important role it has played during the past six years.

China is now earnestly fulfilling the commitments it made at the Summit. Our legislative bodies have formulated and approved a host of laws and legal regulations on the survival, protection and development of children, on the basis of our Constitution. A fairly complete legal system for the protection of the rights and interests of children has taken shape. In 1992, the Chinese Government officially made public the Outlines of the Plan on the Development of Chinese Children in the 1990s. The State Council has set up a Committee on Women and Children, which oversees the implementation of the Outlines.

Thanks to the unremitting efforts of the Chinese Government, the basic conditions of Chinese children have markedly improved, and most of the indicators have reached the mid-decade goals. In the field of health care China has now established a health-care system for women and children suited to our conditions. The three-tier health-care and disease-prevention network in both urban and rural areas covers children throughout the country. The wide and planned use of vaccines for children has greatly reduced the incidence of vaccine-preventable disease as well as the rate of mortality. It is expected that the goal of eliminating polio will be reached by the year 2000. In 1995 the mortality rate for Chinese babies and children under five was 36.4 per thousand and 44.5 per thousand, respectively, down about 27 per cent as compared to 1991.

In the field of education, the Chinese Government has always made child education a top priority and has yearly increased its input. At present, the enrolment rate

for school-age children is 98.5 per cent and that of girls 98.2 per cent, both surpassing the mid-term targets. The Hope Project initiated throughout the country in 1989 to help children who cannot afford schooling has kept in school 1,250,000 children who would otherwise have dropped out.

China attaches great importance to the protection of handicapped children and has tried very hard to create favourable conditions for their survival and development. By the end of 1995, 360,000 child patients suffering from the sequelae of polio have improved their physical functions after undergoing operations, and more than 60,000 deaf children have regained their hearing. The enrolment rate for school-age handicapped children has risen from 20 per cent in 1990 to 60 per cent today, and up to 80 per cent in economically advanced regions. Far from being content with those achievements, the Chinese Government is making and will continue to make even greater efforts in this regard.

The mid-decade review should both evaluate progress and identify existing problems. From a global point of view, among the many target areas set at the Summit the response to some remains weak, such as reducing malnutrition, cutting down the maternal mortality rate and increasing adult literacy. There is an even greater need for the international community to make special efforts greatly to reduce the mortality rate of children under five. In this connection, the Chinese delegation shares the views of the Secretary-General on the survival, protection and development of children in the next five years and concurs with the recommendations set forth in his report.

The Chinese delegation believes that the international community should concentrate its efforts in the following areas: First, poverty remains the fundamental cause that jeopardizes the survival, protection and development of children. Poverty in families and communities has denied many children access to health care and education. Poverty is also one of the causes of child labour and prostitution. Unless poverty is eliminated, the promotion of the survival, protection and development of children will be no more than empty words. Therefore, the international community, and the United Nations in particular, should give top priority to the elimination of poverty in promoting the cause of children.

Secondly, one of the main goals set at the World Summit for Children was to put children in conflict and war-torn areas under special protection. In recent years, some regions have seen constant armed conflicts and wars. As a result, there are large numbers of children who need such protection. The international community, and especially the relevant United Nations agencies, should make special efforts to provide these unfortunate children with timely protection. The United Nations should also take effective measures to protect the basic rights and interests of innocent children in countries under sanctions.

Thirdly, protecting children from harmful information and materials is one of the main elements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Unfortunately, the culture of violence, murder, pornography and drugs running rampant in some countries has victimized a large number of children. What is more, this culture is being extended to other regions of the world, posing a threat to the physical and mental health of their children. Therefore, it is imperative to implement the aforementioned provisions of the Convention by stopping the production and dissemination of poisonous cultural products and replacing them with healthy information and materials.

Fourthly, the question of resources is the key to the attainment of the end-decade goals. The 20/20 Initiative has its positive aspects and should therefore be promoted. However, in order to get additional resources to help developing countries reach the end-decade goals, efforts must be made to reverse the present downward trend in official development assistance. To take back the commitments made at the Children's Summit would mean cheating children.

Fifthly, sub-Saharan Africa faces even more difficulties in trying to meet the mid-decade goals. The United Nations agencies that provide development assistance, and especially UNICEF, should pay particular attention to this and the South Asian regions and give them more financial, technical and personnel assistance so as to help them catch up with the rest of the world during the next five years.

Nothing in my life would make me happier than to see the smiling faces of children. I sincerely wish that children everywhere can live a happy life.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): The 1990 World Summit for Children and the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are historic landmarks in the consolidation of international efforts to establish the political and legal basis for the advancement of children. Ukraine fully supports the conclusion drawn by the

Secretary-General in his report on the Progress at Mid-Decade on Implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children:

> "The World Summit for Children therefore not only elevated children to a new prominence on the international agenda, but provided a launching pad for a regeneration of the international movement against poverty in all its social and economic dimensions." *(A/51/256, para. 3)*

I think this is a good opportunity to extend our gratitude to the group of countries — namely, Canada, Egypt, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan and Sweden — for its timely initiative to convene a summit devoted to children.

The States signatories to the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and to the relevant Plan of Action have recognized that there was no other task that deserved greater priority than the protection and development of children, who will be responsible for the further survival, stability and progress of human civilization. In our view, the decisions adopted at the World Summit for Children have been tested in the period since, and it has been proved that we are on the right track.

Today's meeting of the General Assembly is very important for evaluating progress on the implementation of the provisions of the above-mentioned documents. From the report of the Secretary-General we can conclude that care of children occupies an important place in the domestic policies of many governments. For its part, Ukraine is making every effort to fulfil its obligations under the Plan of Action. Several months ago, in his letter to the Secretary-General, the President of Ukraine pledged his full support to the efforts of the United Nations to carry out this mid-decade review of progress since the World Summit for Children, emphasizing that the review could become an important basis for further activities directed at the improvement of the situation of children.

In 1991, Ukraine ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, thus taking on new commitments to create an adequate legislative basis for the social protection of families with children. Since then, a number of practical steps have been taken to improve the situation of children in Ukraine. Within the last two years, national programmes on family planning and the children of Ukraine have been approved. An analytical overview, "Children in the conditions of the transition period", has been prepared.

The national programme on children is aimed at creating favourable conditions for: the development of children; ensuring their legal and social protection; preventing diseases; providing the most reliable means of medical care and treatment to children; implementing radical measures to prevent infectious diseases; eliminating malnutrition among children; and implementing measures to prevent crime, drug abuse, alcoholism and smoking among children. To further improve efforts at the national level to implement the provisions of the Convention and the World Declaration, a special inter-agency commission has recently been established.

I have mentioned just these few examples to show that, in spite of the serious economic difficulties Ukraine has experienced during the current transition period, state and government bodies continue to undertake appropriate social measures to preserve the nation's genetic fund, in which the future of Ukraine resides.

Assessment of the mid-decade achievements gives us grounds for some optimism. At the same time, it reveals spheres in which no progress has yet been made. The continued deterioration in the condition of children in many regions of the world is a matter of special concern. Specifically, the problem of preventing and eradicating the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography requires urgent and effective measures at national, regional and international levels. The First World Congress on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm this past August, was an important and timely step in this direction.

It is the view of our delegation that such United Nations institutions as UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and others should continue to play a key role in this regard. I would like to commend the efforts of UNICEF in my country. We also welcome the recent decision to establish a regional UNICEF office for Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States countries, with liaison offices in Kiev, Minsk and Moscow.

The current discussion of the Secretary-General's report shows that much work still has to be done. We, therefore, have to undertake additional joint efforts to find new solutions if we want to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children by the year 2000. The more we care about our children today, the more confident we

can be about their future, and hence about the future of each country, every region and the world as a whole.

We should always remember that there were times when we too were children, with our dreams and the expectations of our parents. There is a famous proverb, which I believe is not unique to my country: as you sow, so shall your reap. So, as the Secretary-General rightly stated yesterday morning, let us put children first. Let us do everything possible to meet the expectations of the world's children.

Ms. Smolcic (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The World Summit for Children is part of a trend to give prominence to the cause of children in the international political agenda. The World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action mark our commitment to pursue the action already initiated to achieve a series of development goals and strategies for children in the decade of the 1990s.

We believe that the results achieved at mid-decade should sustain the momentum of the process in favour of children, and that a comprehensive approach is needed, since there is inevitably a close link to development, human rights, the environment and population.

To prepare its plan of action on social policy and in the areas of education, children in particularly difficult circumstances, nutrition, women and health, Uruguay set up a coordinating team which has enjoyed the technical and financial support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), assistance from the technical cooperation programme of the Planning and Budget Office of the Presidency of the Republic, the Inter-American Development Bank, and leaders and officials of all the sectors involved.

Because of the evolution of its social policies on children, Uruguay stands out in the regional context. Historically speaking, the consolidation of a democratic Uruguay and of republican principles has been linked to the development of its educational system and the social protection of children and youth.

In the field of education, although the literacy rate in Uruguay stands at 97 per cent, the Government of Uruguay has embarked on the implementation of an overall educational reform without precedent this century, whose priorities include: strengthening the quality of education at the various levels; expanding the coverage of pre-school education to include children aged four to five years, resulting in the enrolment of 25,000 new pupils by the year 2000; restructuring class schedules for secondary education so as to increase the time students spend in educational establishments; and redesigning the education available in the professional technical field by remodelling university education to meet the needs of the labour market and create new careers.

With regard to children's health, the early development and maturity attained in the institutionalization of social services have led to great progress as can be seen in the indicators on infant survival.

The main goals of the Ministry of Public Health are to increase the rates of breastfeeding and substantially reduce infant mortality, which fell last year to 16 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Similarly, one of Uruguay's key objectives in the field of health is to improve the mental, physical and emotional well-being of children, which is already reflected in the reduction of infant mortality. However, one problem to be resolved is the fact that only 15 per cent of Uruguayan children are breastfed up to six months of age. This therefore affects a child's survival, development and growth. Thus the challenge is to make a reality of the target that 75 per cent of children should have six months of natural breastfeeding by the year 2000. This will be the most effective ... weapon in reducing ... the infant mortality rate to 10 per 1,000 in a country whose health conditions ensure a quality of life that is outstanding in the region. The Human Development Index calculated by the United Nations Development Programme ranks Uruguay thirty-second in the world and third in Latin America.

Promoting baby-friendly hospitals which, in turn, promote maternal breastfeeding has received special mention by UNICEF. In this regard, Uruguay will take part in the First Southern Cone Congress on Breastfeeding that will take place in Santa Catarina, Brazil, from 26 to 30 October this year. Its aim is the signature of a letter of commitment for the establishment of a uniform policy on incentives for the whole region. This document will be submitted to the First World Congress on Breastfeeding to be held in Thailand in December.

Uruguay undertook to implement the goals agreed at the World Summit for Children and prepared its plan of action for children. According to data provided by UNICEF, our country ranks among those in which most

of the mid-decade goals have been achieved with a high level of sectoral technical commitment. Thus the status of these goals is positive in general. However, rapid changes in Uruguayan society have given rise to new situations and emerging problems which call for new methodologies and there is therefore a new need to protect the population faced with issues such as child abuse, domestic violence, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and AIDS.

In accordance with the programme of the Government of Uruguay, the main national objectives are geared to a development strategy based on democratic consolidation, strengthening equality and social integration, and a fair distribution of choices and opportunities among all Uruguayan citizens in a society from which no one is excluded. This means creating effective equality of opportunity from the beginning of people's lives and opening new horizons for young people, broadening avenues for their incorporation into the labour market, creating new spheres of activity for the development of their personality and affording them options for their participation in society.

Uruguay is committed to working steadfastly to eliminate obstacles that make it difficult to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children, so that future generations of boys and girls can enjoy decent living standards and our societies attain greater solidarity and equality.

Mrs. Flórez Prida (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My Government endorses the conclusion contained in the Secretary- General's report (A/51/256) that the goals established at the World Summit for Children have had an extraordinary mobilizing power, generating a new level of activity for children around the world.

The progress made is undeniable. The results obtained in child survival goals such as immunization coverage, control of diarrhoeal diseases and the promotion of breastfeeding are enough for us to conclude that the effort made has been worthwhile.

However, we do not think that we should boast when there has been little or no progress made towards the fulfilment of goals identified in such fundamental areas as infant mortality in children under five, malnutrition or the education of girls. Nor can we overlook unequal progress towards such goals that has been made between the different regions, as well as between the different countries within these regions.

It is true that political will in the mobilization and empowerment of all resources in pursuit of such goals has not always been equal at the national level. However, we believe that, in most cases, the basic limitations have been largely caused by structural factors requiring action outside the scope of a specific Government. To aim at the overall development of children without the overall development of the social and material environment where they grow up would make no sense at all.

National efforts must be accompanied by a new philosophy of international solidarity that would generate new resources to help developing countries implement their national Summit follow-up plans. While in one group of countries, government actions in education can focus on such goals as how to ensure their students universal access to computer technology, in a large group of nations, Governments cannot even provide notebooks and pencils required for the functioning of the primary education system.

Cuba wishes very especially to recognize the concrete results attained in inter-organ collaboration within the United Nations system in fulfilling its goals for children, in which the leadership of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been undeniable. In complying with the agreements adopted at the World Summit for Children, Cuba has a national programme of action that operates as an instrument of social policy, supporting the programmes carried out by the country in the overall development of its children. In implementing our national programme, we have had the constant support of the system's bodies and, very particularly, the contribution of agencies involved in children's well-being and health, such as the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UNICEF.

For more than three decades, the Government and organizations of Cuban society have focused their efforts and energies on redressing the serious setbacks that have historically affected its children's living conditions, survival, development and well-being. These efforts have covered all areas of social life, in particular education and health.

Most of the goals set by the World Summit for Children for the year 2000 have already been attained or surpassed by Cuba. This is particularly significant when we consider that it was precisely the years following the

Summit that have been the most difficult in the entire economic history of the island. Our country had to come to grips with the sudden break in economic relations, trade and forms of productive supplementation that had been established over decades with the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This was accompanied by the tightening of the United States blockade, inclusive of food and medicine for our children.

The country's purchasing power dropped by approximately 80 per cent between 1989 and 1993. This will give an idea of the scope of the efforts undertaken to maintain and even improve some indices of the well-being of Cuban children. In Cuba, 97.6 per cent of children between the ages of 6 and 14 are currently in school and the infant mortality rate has been under 10 per 1,000 live births for four consecutive years; this rate was 9.4 in 1995.

The premise that a child's happiness is worth more than all the riches of the world has guided my Government's policy, and not only towards Cuban children. More than 15,000 Cuban doctors have rendered their services, at no cost, in dozens of countries. Furthermore, thousands of children from all over the world have studied in our schools and colleges. More than 10,000 children, victims of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, have undergone treatment in our country.

Cuba supports the convening of a General Assembly special session within five years to review the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action for children and to set the goals and strategies that will guide our collective action in the first years of the coming millennium.

May I conclude this statement by reaffirming my Government's commitment to the overall development of children. This goal, as has been the case over the past three decades, will continue to determine the design of policies and programmes in all spheres in my country. The well-being of children constitutes an essential value of Cuban culture.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): In 1990, the World Summit for Children adopted a World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and a Plan of Action for its implementation. The Declaration presented us with a challenge and an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children. The Plan of Action identified seven major goals relating to the survival, health, nutrition, education, and protection of children for fulfilment by the year 2000.

Leaders from every corner of the world who were gathered in this very Hall declared a solemn commitment to build a world order that would safeguard the most precious resource of the human race — its children. Referring to the Summit, the 1990 Report on the State of the World's Children stated that

> "A major renewal of effort to protect the lives and the development of children, and to end the worst aspects of poverty, would ... be the greatest long-term investment which the human race could make in its future economic prosperity, political stability, and environmental integrity." *(The State of the World's Children 1990, OUP, p. 4)*

This statement continues to hold true today and, indeed, it will for years to come.

Immediately after the World Summit, countries started to translate their commitments into action.

In the Philippines, the Plan of Action for the Filipino Children in the 1990s and Beyond, a product of cooperative efforts of the Government, non-governmental organizations and other members of the civil society, was put in place. It was my country's response to the Summit's call to put children first in the development agenda. Our commitments to and goals for Filipino children were made part of the country's Medium-term Development Plan and of our Social Reform Agenda.

At this juncture, I wish to make special mention of the valuable assistance and contribution of the United Nations Children's Fund in our efforts to implement our Plan of Action. Our thanks also go to our development partners and to the other members of the United Nations system of operational activities for development.

Six years later, the Secretary-General reports that in most countries there is an encouraging trend towards the achievement of the majority of the goals. However, his report also acknowledges the lack of significant progress in some areas, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and in South Asia.

Our main challenge today is the achievement of the Summit goals by the year 2000. There is now an even greater need for all members of the international community, the United Nations system, the private sector and non-governmental organizations, to work together for the world's children. Countries that are in danger of

missing even the mid-decade goals by the end of this century — such as those in sub-Saharan Africa and the least developed countries in Asia and Latin America — deserve our special attention and assistance. The Philippines joins others in making an appeal to the donor community to reverse the trend in the flow of official development assistance. In places where progress has been significant, our challenge is to sustain such gains. We cannot afford to slow down, because children cannot wait. We express the sincere hope that the almost universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child will give a stronger shield of protection to children affected by armed conflict, exploitation, abuse and neglect. At any given time, our commitment to children must transcend political or any other considerations not related to their survival, protection or development.

Today, the Philippines recommits itself to the goals and objectives of the World Summit for Children. We shall continue to do our utmost for Filipino children. Within our limited capability, we stand ready to cooperate with others.

The 1990 World Summit for Children set specific, measurable and time-bound goals. To enable us to gauge our efforts at the end of the decade, the Philippines recommends that a special session of the General Assembly be held in the year 2001 to review the status of the Summit goals.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his report on the progress at mid-decade on implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children. It is particularly gratifying for me to participate in this debate on this item, which has always been a matter of great interest and commitment for the Government of Argentina.

The World Summit for Children, held six years ago, was a historic landmark in the world's progress for the cause of children. At that time, it was our conviction that we were inaugurating an era in which the concerns of children would acquire unprecedented political significance. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and its rapid, almost universal ratification by 187 States are events which we welcome with real satisfaction.

The Secretary-General's report notes encouraging achievements in the fields of health, nutrition, education and sanitation. We note that three out of five countries are about to achieve the general goal of increasing the child survival rate or have a good chance of doing so. The report emphasizes important achievements in the area of immunization and the virtual elimination of the usual endemic diseases. Iodized salt has reached 1.5 billion persons to prevent such diseases, saving 1 million children per year by increasing the family's capacity to treat dehydration.

However despite all these efforts, there are discouraging indicators which show that there has been virtually no progress since 1990 in the area of infant nutrition, maternal mortality and sanitation. It is clear to us that these efforts should go hand in hand with a strong emphasis on education — the only way to eradicate these serious problems completely. To achieve the goals set for the year 2000, we will need to continue to mobilize resources on all levels: national budgets, the private sector, civil society, donor organizations and non-governmental organizations.

In the last six years, Argentina has consolidated expanded programmes of immunization for all children under seven years of age, distributing throughout the country 22 million doses of vaccines annually. We have also continued the second stage of eliminating neonatal tetanus by vaccinating women between 12 and 49 years of age in the provinces most at risk, with a coverage of 900,000 persons in 1995. The consolidation of the programme to eradicate measles, which began in 1992 with a massive inoculation of more than 10 million children and youths between one and 14 years of age and the establishment of a monitoring system for certain diseases, have led to a drastic reduction in cases, which went from 5,000 to 8 laboratory-confirmed cases in 1995.

The Argentine Government is extremely concerned over the growing number of incidents throughout the world related to the sale of minors, traffic in organs, prostitution and child pornography. We appeal to the international community to adopt all necessary measures, including administrative or legislative measures, to eradicate these crimes and convict the criminals.

With the support of many members of the Latin American and Caribbean group, my country took steps in 1994 to prepare a binding legal instrument to fight the traffic in minors. The report on this matter submitted in 1995 by the Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime pointed to a series of specific situations and to the growth of this phenomenon. The responses by Governments to the Secretary-General's questions have been in favour of preparing a binding instrument in this

field. In our view, it is important for the Secretary-General to continue to obtain the views of States on the preparation of such a convention on the international traffic in minors.

We subscribe with enthusiasm to the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action, and we congratulate the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden for the initiative and the results of the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Based on the contribution of these international events, we wish to emphasize the need to highlight very particularly in describing the present situation not only the poverty and abandonment of victimized children, but also the moral degradation, the perversion and the gross indecency of the criminals who abuse them.

I wish to congratulate all relevant organizations of the United Nations for their part in these successes: the United Nations Children's Fund, the organ directly responsible for children, for its characteristic efficiency; the World Health Organization for its fundamental role in preparing the goals relating to health and its support to countries for the attainment of these goals; and the many non-governmental organizations of Argentina and the rest of the world.

Finally, I wish to state that we believe that the General Assembly should consider the possibility of holding, five years hence, a special session to review again the scope of our promises and achievements.

Mrs. Vargas (Nicaragua) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: In the 1980s, the report entitled "The State of the World's Children" told us that 250,000 children died every week, a vast majority of them from preventable diseases; that millions barely survived in terrible sanitary conditions; and that the increase in malnutrition of millions of children, especially in developing countries, was alarming. In the course of that decade, approximately 2 million children died the victims of war, and between 4 million and 5 million suffered physical disabilities. Unfortunately, during the same decade the continuation of the debt crisis in the developing world meant that the countries of the South transferred $50 billion a year to the countries of the North and that an average of only 12 per cent of government expenditures were allotted to basic health care.

We believe that we have to emphasize these facts again although they are well known to us all, since they give us a partial picture of the situation at the end of the 1980s. It was in precisely this disconcerting panorama that we were faced with which under the auspices of the United Nations the historic decision was taken to hold the World Summit for Children. In September 1990 more than 159 countries met to adopt a commitment for the children of the world.

Today we are gathered in this General Assembly Hall to consider the report of the Secretary-General on the progress at mid-decade following that Summit. The question that must be asked is, what have we done to change this panorama in these five years? What have we achieved at the national and the international level to implement the goals we set at the World Summit for Children?

My delegation is participating in this debate not only to express what we have done in Nicaragua since the World Summit but also because of our interest in and concern about the depressing situation of the world's children, particularly in developing countries. Like most other developing countries, Nicaragua entered the 1990s in a situation where our children still had many unmet needs. The war that Nicaragua suffered in the 1980s left a devastating mark on children who, as has been the case in other situations, were the innocent victims. This meant that more than 190,000 children were affected directly, including those displaced, orphaned, dead, wounded, maimed, kidnapped and repatriated. These are some of the effects of war that we are still trying to overcome.

The commitment that we undertook at the 1990 World Summit therefore represented a challenge that we had to accept in extremely difficult circumstances, since we entered the decade in the midst of a deep economic crisis with reduced resources, an oppressive external debt and great demands and needs for social services. At the same time, we have had to fulfil certain necessary obligations to rehabilitate our economy. These conditions, as has been the case in many countries, as recognized in the Secretary-General's report, have had a negative effect on our social indicators.

Nevertheless, despite our economic and financial difficulties, our Government has always decided in favour of complying with the goals set at the Summit. As part of this commitment, in 1990 Nicaragua established the National Commission for the Protection of Nicaraguan Children, which is responsible for coordinating and regulating educational matters through governmental and non-governmental initiatives relating to children. In 1992, we established the National Plan of Action for Human Development, Children and Youth for the period 1992-2000, with a view to initiating actions to alleviate and reduce poverty. During these five years, through

national days of health, we have achieved 100 per cent immunization coverage for tuberculosis, 90 per cent for poliomyelitis and an average of 75 per cent for diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus, which means that, little by little, we are reaching the goals set in these fields.

Nicaragua is also a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and, pursuant to its provisions, submitted its first report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in May this year. In that report, Nicaragua recognized the difficulties faced by Nicaraguan children. The Committee also prepared a number of recommendations that our Government is studying with great interest, especially those that pertain to the urgent need for legal reform to benefit children and to recognize the rights of boys and girls in my country. In this connection, we can state that on 4 July 1996 the President of Nicaragua, Ms. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, submitted to the National Assembly for discussion a draft code on children and adolescents, which incorporates a new legal approach which would legally guarantee attention to and comprehensive protection of children and adolescents in Nicaragua.

We have read with great interest the report of the Secretary-General; we can see that some positive steps have been taken at mid-decade and that, while progress varies from region to region, important progress has been achieved worldwide, especially in the areas of immunization, prevention and the treatment of communicable diseases. We can also note that in the field of education, as the report emphasizes, progress has been made in many countries. As is evident from the report, during these five years, significant progress has been achieved worldwide on institutional aspects. We can say today that most of the countries that participated in the World Summit have created commissions for children and have prepared national programmes or plans, and that the Convention on the Rights of the Child has already been adopted by more States than any other human rights covenant in history.

However, we are obliged to state that it is of concern that, as can be seen not only in the report of the Secretary-General but also in "The State of the World's Children 1995", so far in the 1990s and despite the achievements made, the harmful situations faced by children are alarming and must receive due attention. We wish to underscore, as the Secretary-General's report states, that this mid-decade review is cause for celebration. But the report also points out areas where policies, strategies, plans of action and even goals need to be adjusted and perfected. In these five years, we have seen that, although we are making advances to reduce infant mortality and to achieve immunization and basic education for our children, other phenomena, some of which are not new to us, compromise the progress achieved. "The State of the World's Children 1995" describes increasingly frequent disasters, such as those suffered by boys and girls in Angola, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan, Haiti and Bosnia. The statistics which derive from these situations will cast a large shadow on future generations.

According to the report, in recent years, the debt crisis and structural adjustment programmes have reduced real income in many developing countries. With the exception of industrialized countries, many regions of the world are far from achieving the goals. The report recognizes that in Latin America progress has been achieved but the goals are still distant. In countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of independent states and the Baltic States, most of the social and economic indicators have become worse in the first half of the decade.

With regard to Africa, the report states that it is the only region in which the total external debt is greater than the gross national product and that low economic growth and insufficient public resources are such that they have had negative implications for children. Those statistics should be of concern to us all.

To these problems, we must add the crisis of the spread of AIDS, from which millions of children suffer throughout the world, the increase in drug addiction and child prostitution, the effects of national disasters and the deterioration of the environment. These are all new phenomena that have set us back and require us constantly to review our goals and objectives.

As can be seen, the activities of the United Nations, especially the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in support of our Governments' efforts to achieve some of the goals of the World Summit for Children have been of great importance for developing countries. Nicaragua attaches special importance to the activities of UNICEF in the field, particularly its coordination work in national emergencies, and its attention to the social sectors at greatest risk, such as the poorest of our populations who live in rural and marginal areas. This, together with the roles played by the resident coordinators and the national authorities, will contribute more effectively to ensuring the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children.

While the Secretary-General's report emphasizes the response given by the United Nations system to implement the objectives of the Summit, we wish to refer to the part of the report that deals with the mobilization of resources. If more efforts are not made to mobilize additional necessary resources, it will be difficult for developing countries to implement the goals. The report recognizes that, on average, at present only 12 per cent of national budgets are given over to basic social services, and that in many cases this shows little sign of improving. The structural adjustment programmes that many developing countries have had to implement have, on the whole, not yet acquired a human face, and very often — if not in most cases — their negative effects are being felt in social service programmes.

That is why my country attaches due importance to strengthening links between national and international institutions and organizations, as well as to promoting a broad mobilization of resources aimed at expanding activities in defence of children and social communication so as to achieve adjustment with a human dimension. We also consider it very important not to reduce funding to UNICEF programmes in Latin America, which would have a detrimental effect on current technical and policy cooperation with UNICEF in the region.

In conclusion, my delegation concurs with the Secretary-General's conclusions that we need to give greater attention to children who are the victims of armed conflict and exploitation. We also support the work of the working group that is preparing a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. We agree with the Secretary-General's suggestion that for the rest of the decade we should devote greater efforts to the goal of increasing the protection of children who are in particularly difficult circumstances — circumstances such as those in which the majority of children in developing countries live.

Mr. Bjørn Lian (Norway): Allow me first of all to say on behalf of my delegation that we deem the progress made towards achieving the goals set for children's development in the 1990s in the field of health to be promising, and, in some areas, truly impressive. The global trends in the areas of immunization and control of preventable children's diseases are encouraging. The world is on the brink of eradicating both polio and guinea worm disease. With respect to water, the goal set at the World Summit has already been exceeded. However, we also recognize geographical disparities both between and within countries. In the remaining years, the focus in our view should be on readjustments, and on the achievement of goals in the areas of maternal mortality, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Furthermore, we should look at malnutrition, sanitation, the under-five mortality rate, improving the quality of basic education and eliminating the gender gap with regard to access to basic education.

In following up the 20/20 initiative, more emphasis should be given to exploring ways to restructure national budgets, as well as aid budgets, in favour of basic social services. A meeting was held to this effect in Oslo in the spring, hosted by the Governments of Norway and the Netherlands. A follow-up meeting will he held in two years' time at which countries will discuss their experiences.

The recognition of women's rights and needs is a determinant factor for improving children's living conditions and quality of life. Norway is therefore strongly committed to the recognition of women's rights, which should be equal to those of men in all areas of life. This, *inter alia*, means improving women's access to economic resources, and their increased participation in decision-making processes. Recognizing the rights of women to full equality and participation is therefore critical to achieving the World Summit goals.

The gender gap as it affects access to education is particularly serious in Africa. In 1996 Norway decided to support, through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a long-term educational programme for girls in Africa. Norway plans to allocate about NKr 150 million to this programme between 1996 and 1999. The programme covers about 30 countries, and the aim is to strengthen the educational system in individual countries, with an emphasis on increasing the proportion of girls who begin and complete primary school.

Norway was among the first countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in January 1990, and to ratify it, in January 1991. As an indication of the importance my Government attaches to follow-up of the World Summit for Children, I also wish to note that Norway established a separate Ministry for Children and Family Affairs in January 1991. However, the needs and interests of children and adolescents were high on the political agenda in my country even before that. The Norwegian Government instituted an ombudsman for children as far back as 1981 — the first country in the world to do so. Since then other countries have done the

same, drawing on the Norwegian experience. This experience is also being transferred to some developing countries, for instance Nicaragua, in a process facilitated through Norwegian development assistance. The ombudsman for children has a wide mandate and is an independent spokesperson for children in Norway. The ombudsman promotes children's interests vis-à-vis Governments and official authorities as well as the private sector. He is also responsible for calling attention to developments that are harmful to children, and for proposing changes to improve the situation of children.

In response to the Plan of Action and the Convention, and in recognition of our global responsibility towards children, the Norwegian Government has drawn up a strategy for development assistance focusing on children. More attention will be given concentrating our official development assistance on purposes benefitting children directly. Priority areas include children's rights, children's health, children's nutrition, their education, the care and early stimulation of children and vulnerable groups of children.

The child is not an object, but a subject. Each child must be treated with respect for his or her dignity and value. And the responsibility for improving children's lives lies with each one of us, in our daily relationship with and care for children. However, we cannot deny that great responsibility also rests with each Government to establish and pursue policies favourable to children and to their families. I would say that children's living conditions and well-being should be taken as a significant indicator of the general situation in a country in terms of equality and the distribution of a country's resources.

The Norwegian Government recognizes and particularly appreciates that many Governments of developing countries have prepared and are successfully implementing national action plans for children. This is in line with the Declaration and recommendations of the World Summit. These are strategic instruments for striving towards and hopefully reaching the World Summit goals. My Government is a strong advocate of so-called recipient responsibility, which means that policies and strategies in all aspects of the development of a country must be based on that country's own priorities. And these priorities should be based on the reality in that country as defined by its people through participatory processes.

My Government is strongly committed to questions concerning children, to satisfying children's needs and to assuring their rights. At the World Summit in 1990 emphasis was put on children's health. The world now faces great challenges related to the implementation of the rights of the child. Today, there is a balance between focus on the health of children and on their social rights. The World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held at Stockholm in August, was a forceful contribution to bringing an end to this fundamental violation of the rights of the child.

Allow me in this context also to report that Norway will host a conference at Oslo in October next year. That conference will address the challenges related to the protection of children from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous, to interfere with the child's education or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Our particular reason for raising the issue of child labour is to identify how Norway and other countries can actively contribute to speeding up progress towards real implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and respect for the International Labour Organization Minimum Age Convention and other relevant international instruments, through development assistance and other forms of international cooperation. The approach should be to facilitate an open and constructive dialogue between Governments and representatives from organized groups of civil society, defining complementary strategies to reach the objective of combatting child labour. The conference in Oslo will focus on economic exploitation of the youngest children. Special efforts will be made to identify strategies for the eradication of child labour by children under 15 years of age.

On behalf of the Norwegian Government, let me commend the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for its special role as a forceful advocate for children's well-being and children's rights all over the world and for its concrete and targeted action to mobilize resources to fulfil the goals set for the year 2000. Let me also commend the Committee on the Rights of the Child, under the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which is directly responsible for the follow-up of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for its advise and support to Governments in their implementation of the Convention.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): If children are a country's wealth, a country's worth is measured by how it cares for its children. The 1989 adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1990 World Summit for Children, and the World

Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children are welcome reminders that in the 1990s the Members of the United Nations take this responsibility seriously.

A few weeks ago the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) organized a ceremony in this building to commemorate the mid-decade review of the 1990 World Summit for Children. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, joined the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Razali Ismail, the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Carol Bellamy, and ministers and representatives of the five other initiating States of the World Summit to mark that important occasion. Their statements during the ceremony were strikingly similar: that while we, the world community, have made significant progress in fulfilling the objectives of the Summit's Plan of Action, much more remains to be done.

Canada is proud to have worked with Mr. James Grant, the previous Executive Director of UNICEF, and the other initiating States — Mexico, Pakistan, Sweden, Mali and Egypt — to make the World Summit a reality. As Mr. Axworthy stated, Canada renews its pledge made at the Summit to ensure full respect for the rights of children everywhere.

Through Canada's national programme of action, the Brighter Futures Initiative, which emerged from the World Summit, Canada ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, introduced a child tax benefit, created an action plan for children and implemented a child development initiative. This latter programme emphasizes the important gains for children and society when children six years old and under get off to the best possible start in life. More than this, the Brighter Futures Initiative emphasized the link between our responsibility to the children of Canada and our responsibility to the children of the world.

In our 1995 blueprint for foreign policy, known as "Canada in the World", we give priority in our official development assistance to human rights, democracy and good governance, including an explicit reference to the rights of children as an integral part of that priority.

(spoke in English)

Indeed, by promising to commit 25 per cent of its official development assistance to meeting basic human needs, Canada has surpassed the United Nations goal of allocating 20 per cent of such assistance to basic social needs. We estimate that we contribute $660 million a year in support of children, a great deal of which is meeting basic human needs. There is a host of programmes and initiatives in this regard that we are proud of, but none more so than our efforts to reduce iodine deficiency, the principal cause of mental retardation worldwide. By UNICEF's estimate, progress towards universal salt iodization in 1995 saved 7 million children in 46 countries from mental impairment.

Canada will continue to focus on such issues as children and AIDS, street children and education. Canada's current investment in girl-child education is an example of the important interplay between gender equity, child well-being and sustainable development. For the past two years, Canada and UNICEF have been involved in a primary education programme for girls in 15 African countries. We will continue to pursue our goals in these and other areas in partnership with the United Nations and UNICEF and such Canadian non-governmental organizations as Save the Children Canada, Street Kids International and HealthReach.

Several days after the 30 September ceremony, Mr. Axworthy appeared before a parliamentary subcommittee in Canada to outline the Government's priorities in respect to international child-labour issues. We all know that child labour is rooted largely in poverty and that the eradication of abusive forms of child labour does not lend itself to easy solutions. Simply putting children out of work is not the answer. There must be alternatives for ensuring their education and care and the income of their families. Development cooperation, with an emphasis on poverty reduction and meeting basic needs, is central to Canada's efforts to attack the root causes of abusive child labour.

Canada has identified three areas in which we have deployed our development assistance to overcome the problem of child labour. First is affordable access to primary education, with particular attention to girls — a major goal identified at the World Summit. Second is improving the status, role and economic security of women as equal partners in development. These measures directly promote the well-being of children. Third is support for good governance. This is essential if Governments are to advance social-development goals in partnership with civil society and enforce existing laws and regulations governing the employment of children.

In the area of child sexual exploitation, Canada has amended its criminal code to prohibit child pornography and has introduced legislation that criminalizes child-sex tourism practiced by Canadians. Mr. Axworthy attended the World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children at Stockholm in August, along with an impressive array of other people, including 700 representatives from 119 countries, over 100 participants from the United Nations itself and other international organizations, 500 non-governmental-organization and youth delegates and 500 media representatives. That high degree of participation in the Congress indicated the level of interest and commitment to the issue, but the success of the Congress will be measured ultimately by the extent to which the commercial sexual exploitation of children declines. In the interim, a measure of its success will be the extent to which the Declaration and Agenda for Action approved at the Congress are implemented. Later in this session, the Canadian delegation will be working to ensure effective follow-up to the Stockholm Agenda for Action.

The situation of child soldiers is also of great concern to Canada. We are participating actively in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights Working Group to develop an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the situation of children in armed conflict. Another important step will be the release early next month of a report by the United Nations Secretary-General's expert on children in armed conflict, Mrs. Graça Machel. Again, my delegation will be working with others to take concrete action in response to Mrs. Machel's recommendations.

Canada is also giving close attention to children in post-conflict reconstruction and transition economies. Children are victims in disproportionate numbers of injuries involving landmines. As we have seen in Bosnia and Somalia, they are also tragically subject to post-traumatic stress. The recent international meeting at Ottawa provided important impetus for work on a global ban on landmines.

The mid-decade review is a testimony to what the world community can accomplish when it sets clear objectives and works together to achieve those goals. It is also a compelling statement of the work that lies ahead. Canada will work hard with all Members to complete our mission of establishing children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children. Nothing we could achieve here will be more important.

Ms. Durrant (Jamaica): I wish to join previous speakers in thanking the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/51/256. That report gives a very detailed and clear analysis of the background to the World Summit for Children, the end-decade and mid-decade goals that were set at the Summit and the enormous effort and energy which were generated thereafter. We recall the way in which the wider international community became involved in an amazing drive to push the affairs of children to the top of our agenda.

Perhaps even more significant, however, was the Summit's catalytic effect on the issues relating to social development. The Secretary-General in his report rightly credits the children's Summit with encouraging the

> "regeneration of the international movement against poverty in all its social and economic dimensions." *(A/51/256, para. 3)*

Indeed, the Summit provided a blueprint for the series of global Conferences that followed, both at the Conferences themselves and in the implementation process.

The Government and people of Jamaica share in the Secretary-General's celebration of the significant progress made in the area of children's health and development, specifically in the achievement of mid-decade and even some end-decade goals by various countries and regions. Similarly, we share and support the Secretary-General's warning that there is still so much more to be done if we are to improve and/or maintain the existing conditions under which our children live.

Like many of the nations in the Latin American and Caribbean regions, Jamaica is on track to achieve most of the end-decade goals, having met all the mid-decade goals set by the World Summit, as well as those set by the Nariño Accord, which was adopted by regional leaders in 1994. The Nariño goals largely mirror those of the World Summit, but are more expansive in their scope and focus on issues of particular concern to the Latin American and Caribbean countries — for example, problems of teenage pregnancies, disabilities and child rights.

In August this year, regional leaders met at Santiago de Chile to review the progress made in the implementation of the goals of the Summit and of the Nariño Accord. The ministers adopted the Santiago Accord, which includes a set of goals that go even

beyond those made set at Nariño. The new Accord calls for the adoption of modern social policies based on human and children's rights and defines the new goals for the region, primarily in the areas of child rights, reproductive health and gender equality.

Despite Jamaica's many strides over the past few decades in the areas of maternal and child health, there is a need for critical improvement in these areas, as well as in the area of child protection. Jamaica was the first country of the Caribbean Community to appear before the Committee on the Rights of the Child. We have since finalized a new country programme with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which will promote compliance with the recommendations of the Committee. This will be done through the implementation of selected and relevant goals of our national plan of action.

As with many other nations, poverty is the basic cause of problems affecting Jamaica's children, with one third of those under four years of age living in extreme poverty. The Government of Jamaica has declared the eradication of poverty its highest priority. Consequently, any programme related to the well-being of children will have to focus on deprived, underserviced geographical areas and low-income groups. To illustrate, the Government of Jamaica new cooperation programme with UNICEF has four components, which will concentrate on the survival, protection and development rights of Jamaica's children. This will, in turn, be based on the following main areas: social planning; advocacy and mobilization, particularly as they relate to the rights of all children to survival, development and protection; education and young child development; the needs and rights of children who are especially vulnerable; and improving the quality of life in designated low-income communities through the provision of basic services and the empowerment of the community. We recognize, of course, that this programme is an ambitious one, made even more so by the fact that it focuses mainly on those problem areas which require much advocacy, sustained over a long period of time.

The Secretary-General in his report identifies resource mobilization as a major challenge faced by countries in the implementation process. In this regard, we believe that the collaboration is vital among governmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, bilateral and multilateral development-assistance agencies. Here, I would like to emphasize that countries should be rewarded, and not penalized, for their successes in the area of child development.

In this, the sixth anniversary year of the World Summit for Children, when we are but three years shy of the year 2000, questions are often raised as to the utility of the many global conferences which have been held since 1990. The World Summit for Children stands as an impressive testimony to the ability of such conferences to generate concrete results. Now, even six years later, the spirit generated by the Summit is still at a high point. I would like to urge all present not to lose track of this positive development. We must do everything in our power to ensure that, in another six years, the drive to improve the welfare of the world's children will be as strong or even stronger. In this connection, Jamaica wishes to endorse the suggestion, presented in the Secretary-General's report, that the General Assembly consider holding a special session in 2001 to again examine the progress achieved in the implementation of the World Declaration and Plan of Action, as well as to consider goals and strategies beyond the year 2000.

Mr. De Rojas (Venezuela) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: We wish to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his report on the progress at mid-decade and for his assessment of achievement of the mid-decade and end-decade goals, as requested in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. The report is a clear reflection of the task ahead, since it includes an objective analysis, not only of the progress achieved at mid-decade, but also of the lessons learned and the challenges ahead for achieving the goals for children by the year 2000.

The World Summit for Children marked a definitive step towards an era in which children's issues will acquire all the political importance they deserve and promises made to children at the international level will become plans of action. In this regard, as the report states, this process of national programmes of action is unique in the history of the United Nations development work and represents a new modality in the relationship between international decision-making and measures at the national level.

In our region, the Ibero-American Summit held in April 1994 adopted a number of objectives for the countries of the Nariño Accord. At the third Inter-American ministerial meeting on children, held in Chile on 8 and 9 August this year, we reiterated the priority of boys, girls and adolescents in the social agenda for the hemisphere for the remainder of the century, fostering integration of social and economic policies following an integrated approach, which would increase the level of

social investments so as to overcome poverty and make progress on human development.

At that meeting, we also once again reiterated our commitment to fulfilling the goals for children and social development by the year 2000, in accordance with national priorities, policies, programmes and laws, so as to adapt these goals to the practical situation in each country.

In Venezuela in recent years, we have undertaken a series of actions aimed at improving our management of social policies. In this regard, we have reviewed and updated the goals of the Summit through programmes, projects and actions aimed at promoting respect for the civic rights of children embodied in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We wish to mention the legislative progress made in my country to bring internal laws in line with the Convention's provisions.

Venezuela stands firm in its commitment to the most important resource for our development: our boys, girls and adolescents. In order to achieve our goals regarding malnutrition, we have taken action in the areas of food supplements, including a programme for minors who are not in institutions; programmes for nutritional rehabilitation; programmes for milk and other dairy programmes for pre-schoolers; snack programmes for pre-schoolers; multi-home programmes; a food programme for the school population; and food scholarships. The refocusing of social policy on certain population groups has been a creative step. The principal criteria used to identify the groups to focus on include vulnerability and the prioritizing of higher-risk groups, such as children under six, pregnant women, nursing mothers, out-of-school youth, malnourished children and so on.

"Agenda Venezuela", an integral part of the agreement my country recently signed with the International Monetary Fund, embodies the right of Venezuelans to protect their family as the fundamental nucleus of our society. The State of Venezuela has committed itself to giving priority attention to mothers and children, health and education. "Agenda Venezuela" also incorporates a range of social programmes aimed at channelling resources towards the protection of the most vulnerable social groups in order partially to compensate for decreases in family income during the difficult adjustment period.

Venezuela continues to support all preventive-action measures, *inter alia*, to improve the quality of education through programmes promoting mutual respect between boys and girls in pre-school and primary and secondary educational establishments.

As far back as the last century, José Martí wrote that girls should know the same as boys and that we should work for children because they are the hope of the world. We must unite our efforts to achieve the goals before us so that the dreams of the past and the promises of the present may come true.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): At this review of the progress at mid-decade on implementation of resolution 45/217 of the General Assembly on the World Summit for Children, the delegation of Tunisia would like to comment on this issue.

I wish to congratulate the Secretary-General on the quality of the report submitted to us. The World Summit for Children held six years ago marked an historic stage in the growing importance of the children's cause in the world through the adoption of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and a Plan of Action which identified goals for States to the year 2000 and involve the United Nations in support for national efforts.

First, I wish to recall that the goals set in 1990 at the World Summit for Children have had an extraordinary mobilizing effect, which we welcome. Throughout the world, activities undertaken have given rise to a burgeoning of programmes for children. They have also helped to create new partnerships between Governments and non-governmental organizations. Donors, the media, society and international organizations have, for their part, mobilized around a common goal.

The World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action, as well as the integration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into international law, have provided the legal framework that has supported the growing momentum for the children's cause throughout the world. In defining quantifiable and time-bound goals, the Summit was a pioneer in mobilizing resources and eliciting commitment.

With regard to specific achievements, Tunisia welcomes the results arrived at in many countries in terms of follow-up activities to the World Summit. The report of the Secretary-General on this question provides some information, some of which seems extremely

eloquent to me. The goals regarding the survival of children have been achieved with respect to immunization coverage, control of diarrhoeal diseases, poliomyelitis, the control of iodine-deficiency disorders, access to drinking water and the promotion of breastfeeding.

Eighty-nine countries have already reached the mid-decade goal by achieving 90 per cent immunization coverage. There is every reason to hope for the elimination of poliomyelitis by the year 2000. The number of people without access to drinking water has fallen by about one-third since 1990. The mid-decade goal has also been attained in the matter of the promotion of breastfeeding with the adoption of baby-friendly practices in maternity facilities. Here, I would like to stress the very positive impact of the Plan of Action in terms of sustainable development for the countries of the South.

These achievements, according to recent reports of the United Nations Children's Fund, have helped significantly to foster the well-being of the people concerned throughout the world.

First, the time-bound goals, which were defined with local conditions uppermost in mind, have speeded up development efforts. Secondly, these results have shown that the provision of equipment and access to basic services, however essential, are not enough. Above all, poor people need to be able to control their social and economic future and we need to strengthen national capacities and social mobilization, the keys to lasting progress. Basic education, primary health care and nutrition are part of the most effective and viable strategy for breaking the spiral of poverty, overpopulation and environmental degradation. That kind of investment can help considerably to reduce poverty in a relatively brief span of time.

With regard to Tunisia and its national efforts, I am pleased to refer to the achievements that the public authorities, in close cooperation with the active forces of civil society, have made for children.

Tunisia's interest in child protection and development has evolved remarkably as a basic element in our human-resources development policy. The attention we devote to children is based on the conviction that any investment in future generations is the best guarantee of progress and stability in the country.

The reforms and the steps taken for children are in keeping with the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s. They have been reflected in the elaboration since 1991 of a national programme of action; its adoption and integration into our economic development plan in 1992 shows how determined Tunisia is to honour its commitments to children.

The national programme of action was consolidated by the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991; the celebration of National Children's Day on 11 January every year, pursuant to a decision of the President of the Republic; the establishment in 1995 of the President's prize for the rights of the child, which is awarded every year to individuals, organizations, institutions and bodies that have distinguished themselves nationally, regionally or globally by providing eminent services in the areas of the rights of the child and the protection and development of children; the adoption in November 1995 of the Code for the Protection of Children, which recognizes the higher interests of children and establishes a network of delegates to protect children throughout Tunisia, thus promoting preventive action for children in difficult circumstances; the revision of the Family Code, the Penal Code, the Code of Obligations and Contracts and a certain number of laws to harmonize legislative instruments and to consolidate the rights of children; the creation of a follow-up mechanism to ensure that the objectives of the national programme of action for children are being met through the drafting of an annual report on the situation of children that is submitted to the Council of Ministers in January every year.

In the area of health, we stress the efforts made by Tunisia in terms of basic health, particularly in the area of maternal and child health, wide immunization coverage, the development of family planning services and the extension of social coverage to all of our people.

Among the most important indicators of the success of this health policy, we note the eradication of children's diseases through the establishment by the State of specific intensive national programmes, of which there are now six, constituting the basic components of maternal and children's health. We also note the reduction of the mortality rate for children under five from 244 per thousand live births in 1966 to 38 per thousand in 1994, as well as the reduction of the infant mortality rate from 163 per thousand in 1962 to 32 per thousand in 1994.

The results obtained nationally have enabled my country to enjoy continuous progress in terms of human

development. Human and social progress in Tunisia is not an isolated phenomenon. It involves the programme of action which I mentioned, but it is also part of a world movement that brings together all Members of the United Nations, thus allowing economic development to go hand in hand with social development and leading to the attainment of sustainable human-development goals.

Thus, I wish to express our satisfaction at the progress described in the Secretary-General's report. However, in this field perhaps more than in others, efforts needs to be ongoing. However laudable the achievements might be, we should not lose sight of the fact that many grey areas exist throughout the world in which no social progress has been seen, particularly in terms of the improved status of children, especially in Africa and South-East Asia. Millions of children are still deprived of this progress. The infant mortality rate is going down, but too slowly, and maternal mortality continues to be an acute problem. Little progress has been made as regards malnutrition and elementary education.

Furthermore, children in conflict zones in Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere suffer the most abominable mutilations and continue to die as much from bombs as from the effects of malnutrition and disease. The most dramatic example remains that of Iraqi children, many of whom have died from lack of food and medicines. The international community has a duty to put an end to this tragic situation as soon as possible.

In order to attain the goals of the Summit, we must continue to mobilize resources at every level. I wish to refer here to the Secretary-General's report, which stresses the following points: the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children called upon all countries to re-examine their budgets to ensure that programmes aimed at the protection and development of children would have priority. In order to do this, every effort should be made to ensure that such programmes be protected in times of economic austerity and structural adjustments. In order to attain these goals, clearly, additional resources must be provided. Therefore, the Secretary-General's report says that an additional $20 billion per year would be needed over the course of the decade.

In order to maintain the spirit of the Summit and to keep our promises to children, Tunisia supports the Secretary-General's proposal to hold a special session in five years' time to review progress made on the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.